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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002910

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DEPARTMENT FOR PM, NEA, AND INL;
NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: UK PROPOSES CHAIRING SECURITY COORDINATION UNIT IN
PM SINIORA'S OFFICE

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

1. (C/NF) In a 9/6 meeting with the Ambassador and DATT, UK Ambassador James Watt and British Brigadier General Andrew D. Mackay accurately described a problem faced by donors wishing to help the Lebanese security services: No one is in charge of coordinating requests or trying to match offers with needs. Various political and security officials peddle competing lists of desired equipment, spare parts, and ammunition. McKay claims that he has the backing of PM Siniora and Defense Minister Murr to set up and head a UK-led unit within the PM's office and that would include officers from both the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF). This unit would both coordinate assistance and promote security sector reform. It would not, Mackay insists, be a layer inserted between the security services and bilateral donors, and it would refrain from dealing with sensitive intelligence matters. Mackay emphasized the benign-looking UK face of this coordination unit in its initial stage, and we concur that this unit, under UK leadership, is both welcome and consistent with our own practice of allowing the UK to lead on security sector reform. But we are less enamored with what happens next: Mackay estimates that after 2-3 months, a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDH) lead would replace the UK. According to Mackay, the ESDH lead is essential to freeing up EU resources for security sector reform. Mackay noted that he will be circulating his ideas in Washington on Monday, 9/11. End summary and comment.

NO CENTRAL LEBANESE COORDINATION
IN SECURITY SECTOR REFORM, ASSISTANCE

2. (C/NF) Mackay and Watt reviewed territory familiar to all of us who have worked in security sector assistance and reform: various Lebanese players have different ideas about what is needed or desired, and they find different advisors and experts willing to reinforce their inclinations. Thus, while the U.S. and UK coordinated closely with the LAF on a comprehensive list of priorities for equipment, spare parts, and ammunition, this coordinated list is not the only one being shopped around for the LAF. The situation with the ISF (national police) is even less clear. Potential donors have their own bureaucratic requirements, ideas and desires, and no one is working full time to match offers with requirements.

SINIORA, MURR ENDORSE UK IDEA
OF SETTING UP COORDINATION UNIT

13. (C/NF) Mackay said that he had received an enthusiastic endorsement from both PM Siniora and Deputy PM/Defense Minister Murr to establish a coordination unit within the Prime Minister's office in the Grand Serail. This unit would promote security sector reform, coordinate lists of requirements consistent with security sector reform goals, and help make the connections between donors and needs. Mackay himself would head the unit and be assisted by other UK military and civilian staff. Officers from the LAF and ISF would be seconded to this unit, to ensure the connection between the unit and the security services. With the British Embassy next door to the Grand Serail, the UK staff of the coordination unit would rely on the Embassy for secure communications. Force protection concerns are addressed largely by the extensive security around the Grand Serail.

14. (C/NF) Answering a question from the Ambassador, Mackay emphasized that the unit does not intend to replace the existing bilateral communication between donors and the LAF and ISF. He would not, for example, presume to insert himself as a layer between the Embassy's active ODC and DATT and the LAF. But he would provide a service to all contributors in making sure that what the LAF and ISF were both requesting and receiving made sense and supported our collective goal of security sector reform. In addition, Mackay emphasized that the unit would not be involved in any intelligence matters. Assistance and cooperation in the intelligence field will be handled separately and bilaterally, he said.

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BUT UK LEAD TO BE REPLACED
BY ESDP MISSION IN 2-3 MONTHS

15. (C/NF) For the European countries, Mackay said, it is important that the EU be involved. In his consultations, French and Italian officials emphasized the need for a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission. An ESDP role ensures that EU funds toward security sector reform will flow, Mackay said. Thus, he anticipates that, after two to three months, he and his UK team would depart Lebanon, turning over the unit to an ESDP mission. Mackay said that part of his task would be to set up the proper terms of reference for the unit so that it would meet the needs of non-EU donors even after the UK left.

16. (C/NF) In responding, the Ambassador and DATT agreed with the UK description of the problem. They also noted that, for political reasons, the U.S. has for more than a year supported a UK lead on security sector reform issues and remains satisfied with U.S.-UK cooperation on security sector reform. Thus, having a UK-led coordination unit within the PM's office seemed a sensible approach. But both the Ambassador and DATT expressed reservations about the eventual transfer of the unit to an ESDP mission. While the French have been constructive partners on the political track in Lebanon, the French have been far less forthcoming on security sector cooperation. The Ambassador asked whether there wasn't a danger that the French would simply use the ESDP mission to promote purely French aims, using access and EU resources to do so. Watt agreed that there would have to be some kind of understanding to ensure that a "Mad Gallic takeover" didn't occur when the ESDP stepped in. The DATT suggested that, after the proposed UK transition to the ESDP mission, perhaps the unit could concentrate largely on assistance to the ISF, since that seemed to be where EU resources would go anyway. That way, traditional donors to the LAF could continue to work bilaterally.

¶7. (C/NF) Mackay noted that he would travel to Washington for meetings next week. He said that his primary interlocutor is PM DAS Michael Coulter and will attend an interagency security assistance working group meeting.

COMMENT

¶8. (C/NF) Despite the tight working relationship we have with the French Embassy on political matters, we have found working with the French on security sector issues here to be exasperating. On security assistance, the French are opaque. We believe that this Gallic elusiveness is due in part to French commercial jealousies and in part to the fact that their aid to the LAF is far lower than would be commensurate with the leadership role they purport to play. With the UK, by contrast, we have fewer political dealings (given that the UK profile is far lower here) but extremely close cooperation on security sector reform and assistance. Mackay is well respected and well informed. As long as the coordination unit is under a UK lead, we are certain that the unit Mackay proposes will play a useful role. (The French, in fact, told Mackay separately that they will not hinder his mission but neither will they support it.) But, given our suspicions that the French will try to harness EU money for their own ends, we are far less comfortable with the idea that this unit would transform into a ESDP mission. Admittedly, in Lebanon, we have little experience with an ESDP mission and look to Washington and others for guidance. Ultimately, given the size of the proposed USG contributions to the LAF and the ISF, the GOL is unlikely to ignore us. Thus, if we do not like what Mackay's unit becomes, we can always opt out. So we suggest supporting Mackay's idea for now, while reserving judgment on what happens once/if ESDP takes over. Perhaps by the time Mackay bows out, the GOL, too, will be exercising a more effective lead than is currently the case.

FELTMAN